



10<sup>th</sup> October 2025

## *Access to Services- Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies*



It is wonderful that recent years have seen a growing recognition of the importance of mental health as a cornerstone of general wellbeing. Each year the [World Federation for Mental Health](#) shines a spotlight on this critical human domain through this observance. World Mental Health Day began on October 10, 1992, thanks to the advocacy of the World Federation for Mental Health, under the leadership of Deputy Secretary-General Richard Hunter. In its early years, the occasion focused broadly on raising mental health awareness and reducing stigma. As general awareness has risen however, so has the demand for timely, accessible services, hence the theme for this year, '[Access to Services – Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies](#)'.

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### **Mental Health Under Strain**

Our world is facing a relentless wave of crises, from devastating bushfires, floods, and earthquakes to conflicts, pandemics, and forced displacement. These disasters, both natural and man-made, leave deep emotional scars on the people directly affected. When crisis hits, people need services that are safe, timely, and accessible - no matter who they are or where they live. Because healing doesn't start after the emergency is over, it starts with being able to reach out and find help, right when it's needed most.

But the impact doesn't stop there; the ripple effects, such as stress, anxiety, trauma, and grief, spread through families, communities, and across borders.

There can be no doubt that our modern society places a lot of burden on our emotional reserves:

- ☛ The 24/7 News Cycle & Crisis Fatigue churns out constant exposure to headlines about war, climate disaster, violence, and social unrest with little time to process one event before the next tragedy surfaces. We can live with a sense of anxiety, powerlessness, numbness, or persistent dread, and compassion fatigue for those directly affected.
- ☛ Digital overload and the pressure to "stay informed" can become overwhelming in the 'post-truth era' that abounds with misinformation, conspiracy theories, and online outrage. Traumatic content can often appear in feeds without warning, creating a sense of chaos as people struggle to trust institutions, experts, or each other.
- ☛ Social media dominates culture and the curated perfection of the online world lures us into comparison. Toxic positivity of influencer culture can distort self-image and lead to chronic feelings of inadequacy, especially among young people.
- ☛ Climate Anxiety or Eco-Anxiety loads into existential angst as news of environmental collapse and imminent planetary demise lead to uncertainty about having children, hopelessness about global leadership and an overwhelming sense of personal responsibility, especially for younger people.
- ☛ Rising costs of living, unstable housing, job precarity, and student debt all fuel economic anxiety, while hustle culture glorifies overwork while undervaluing rest and mental health.
- ☛ Despite hyper-connectivity, many feel emotionally isolated. Exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, declining community spaces and fewer in-person interactions lead to loneliness & disconnection.
- ☛ As global fears intensify, tolerance of difference and social inclusion suffer. Racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia remain persistent stressors. Watching violence or hate toward one's own community can be traumatic, and for marginalised groups, these experiences layer on top of everyday mental health challenges.
- ☛ Generational trauma and collective grief compound the struggle for many, where inherited emotional burdens such as family trauma, cultural displacement or war legacies intersect with acute stressors.





Mental health is the cornerstone of everything we do, feel, and become. It is a human issue that shapes how we connect with others, make decisions, handle stress, and show up in the world. Without a solid foundation of mental wellbeing, every other part of life - from physical health to relationships to work - can suffer. When communities prioritize mental health, they build resilience, compassion, and a stronger support network for all.

Communities, both local and virtual, are finding innovative ways to foster connection, advocacy, and mutual support. Grassroots networks mobilise rapidly to offer aid, amplify marginalised voices, and challenge the systems that perpetuate despair. People are increasingly turning to mindfulness, creative expression, and acts of solidarity as antidotes to the relentless churn of bad news, and Governments and organisations are slowly recognising the urgent need for equity in mental health care, though advocacy remains vital to bridge the gap between intention and action.

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### Local Toowoomba Events

There may be a number of events held in and around this day in your local area. In Queensland it coincides with Queensland Mental Health Week (4-12 October 2025) and Toowoomba is hosting a number of activities including the following:

- [Wellbeing Symposium](#): Fri 10 Oct 2025, Toowoomba. Theme: *Lived Experience, Connection & Resilience* with local speakers. Proceeds support Momentum's services.
- [Your Mind Matters - Mental Health Week Expo](#): Wed 8 Oct 2025, 12:00–1:30 pm, Refectory, UniSQ Toowoomba. Meet local providers, grab resources, and join interactive activities.
- [Connect for Mental Wellbeing Expo — Queensland Mental Health Week](#): Tue 7 Oct 2025, from 10:00 am, Civic Square Village Green (behind Toowoomba Library). Hosted with Darling Downs Mental Health, Alcohol & Other Drugs Service.

You are invited to join your communities in building collective coping strategies, advocating for systemic change, and rediscovering the simple rituals of connection and care that plant seeds of renewal and hope for a more humane and resilient future.

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(Written by Perry Bowe - HOPE researcher Qld)